

## English Literature A Level Preparatory Work

### Core Tasks

1) Read the texts you will study in the first term of A Level:

- [\*A Streetcar Named Desire\*](#) - Tennessee Williams (*Methuen Drama, 2008*)
- [\*Mean Time\*](#) - Carol Ann Duffy (*Picador, 2017*)
- [\*The Whitsun Weddings\*](#) - Philip Larkin (*Faber & Faber, 2001*)

2) Successful students embrace the ethos that voracious reading is the key to both enjoyment and success in English Literature. Consequently, we should like you to read one novel from the 'classic' list and one from the 'modern' list below. We should then like you to write a comparative review of these two texts, explaining why you chose them and exploring those features that you found effective (or not, as the case may be). This essay, of around 1000 words, will be submitted in the first week of your lessons.

Additionally, you may wish to extend your reading by exploring texts suggested in the poetry and drama lists. This, however, is recommended rather than compulsory.

#### Classic Novels

*Things Fall Apart* – Chinua Achebe  
*Jane Eyre* – Charlotte Bronte  
*Wuthering Heights* – Emily Bronte  
*A Clockwork Orange* – Anthony Burgess  
*The Outsider* – Albert Camus  
*The Heart of Darkness* – Joseph Conrad  
*Great Expectations* – Charles Dickens  
*Brighton Rock* – Graham Greene  
*Silas Marner* – George Eliot  
*As I Lay Dying* – William Faulkner  
*Tender is the Night* – F Scott Fitzgerald  
*Madam Bovary* – Gustave Flaubert  
*A Passage to India* – EM Forster  
*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* – Thomas Hardy  
*Dubliners* – James Joyce

#### Poetry

*The Oxford Anthology of English Poetry Volume II: Blake to Heaney* – John Wain (ed)  
*Songs of Innocence & Experience* – William Blake  
*Selected Poems* – e e Cummings  
*The Wasteland/ Selected Poems* – TS Eliot  
*Howl* – Allen Ginsberg  
*Death of a Naturalist* – Seamus Heaney  
*Selected Poems* – Ted Hughes  
*The Whitsun Weddings* – Philip Larkin

#### Modern Novels

*The White Tiger* – Aravind Adiga  
*The Handmaid's Tale* – Margaret Atwood  
*The New York Trilogy* – Paul Auster  
*Atonement* – Ian McEwan  
*HHhH* – Laurent Binet  
*The Magic Toyshop*– Angela Carter  
*The Sisters Brothers* – Patrick DeWitt  
*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* – Mohsin Hamid  
*Never Let Me Go* – Kazuo Ishiguro  
*Small Island* – Andrea Levy  
*The Yellow Birds* – Kevin Powers  
*American Pastoral* – Philip Roth  
*The God of Small Things* – Arundhati Roy  
*A Suitable Boy* – Vikram Seth  
*The Stone Diaries* – Carol Shields

#### Drama

*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* – Edward Albee  
*Life of Galileo*– Bertolt Brecht  
*The Cherry Orchard* – Anton Chekhov  
*Medea and other plays* - Euripides  
*Glengarry Glen Ross* – David Mamet  
*Death of a Salesman* – Arthur Miller  
*The Birthday Party* – Harold Pinter  
*Equus* – Peter Shaffer

## Extension Tasks

1. You will study *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams in the first term of A Level. It is considered an example of the Southern Gothic. As such, reading any of the following would be an excellent foundation:

### **American Southern Gothic novels**

- *To Kill a Mockingbird* Harper Lee
- *Absalom, Absalom!* - William Faulkner
- *Short Stories* - Edgar Allan Poe
- *Glass Menagerie* - Tennessee Williams
- *In Cold Blood* - Truman Capote

### **European Gothic novels**

- *Frankenstein* - Mary Shelley
- *Dracula* - Bram Stoker
- *The Castle of Otranto* Horace - Walpole
- *The Picture of Dorian Gray* - Oscar Wilde

### **Plays and playwrights that influenced Tennessee Williams**

- *The Cherry Orchard* - Anton Chekov
- *A Doll's House* - Henrik Ibsen
- *Miss Julie* - August Strindberg

### **Williams' favourite novelist**

- *Lady Chatterley's Lover* - D.H. Lawrence

### **Contemporary American plays**

- *The Glass Menagerie* – Tennessee Williams
- *Death of a Salesman* – Arthur Miller
- *The Iceman Cometh* – Eugene O'Neill

2. Watch [A Streetcar Named Desire](#), filmed in 1951 and directed by Elia Kazan.
3. In preparation for studying *A Streetcar Named Desire* watch the [Complete Tragedy](#) lecture series by Professor John Lennard on Massolit and take notes. Massolit can be accessed by going to the school's virtual library: <https://www.elthamcollege.london/virtual-library/> and then entering the password ECPupil1920. Once you are in, scroll down and you will find a link to Massolit along with other online resources. If this doesn't work, request a forgotten password link to be sent to your school email address which is a registered username.
4. In preparation for study of *Mean Time* watch the '[What makes a poem a poem](#)' Ted Talk by Melissa Kovacs and make a fact sheet. In addition, research the following critical approaches to poetry and make fact sheets:

1. Formalist
2. Psychoanalytic
3. Structuralist
4. Marxist
5. Semiotic (the problem with language)
6. Feminist